



Nashville & Middle Tennessee

24 Hour Crisis & Support Helpline 1-800-334-4628

2018 - 2019  
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October 16, 2018

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Subject: TennCare work requirements

Dear Dr. Long,

The YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed TennCare work requirements. We have been a part of the Nashville community for over 120 years. The YW operates the largest emergency domestic violence shelter in the state of Tennessee. The 51-bed (soon to be 65-bed) Weaver Domestic Violence Center serves almost 500 women and children each year who flee their homes and uproot their lives to escape domestic violence. We also offer trauma informed counseling services and transitional housing support. The women and children we serve access our services after calling the 24-hour Crisis and Support Helpline. We received more than 7,500 calls to this number last year.

Only a handful of survivors come to the YWCA Weaver Center with private insurance. About forty percent of the women we serve have no insurance at all. That means nearly half of the survivors trying to heal from the physical and emotional wounds of domestic violence receive their insurance through TennCare.

All of the women and children we serve have experienced trauma. Many have lived with and through the abuse for months and even years. Their wounds are both visible and, in many cases, invisible. The women and children we serve need consistent, reliable health insurance.

The YWCA absolutely supports the idea that everyone who can work should work. The vast majority of women and families we serve need health care and want to work. We work with our survivors to help them rebuild their lives. But typically, many are physically and mentally unable to work unless they get

health care first. If survivors don't have access to medical care, they're even more vulnerable than when they call our crisis line or come through our shelter

doors. That's why tying an individual's access to health insurance with a work mandate is unnecessarily punitive.

Work requirements are inherently harmful because they discriminate against groups of people who are, to no fault of their own, unable to work. Here are a few important points we want the Bureau of TennCare to know and consider:

- Victims of domestic violence are fleeing their homes and may even have to leave their jobs to escape the abuse. Many even move to a different city where their abuser can't find them.
- Victims of domestic violence aren't usually thinking about updating their addresses as they seek safety in a shelter or with a family member or friend.
- Victims of domestic violence are often physically injured and cannot work.
- Victims of domestic violence often suffer from PTSD and are unable to work.
- How does a woman prove that she is a victim of domestic abuse? It is difficult for a domestic violence victim to meet the proof standard often required by such requirements.
- With many legal proceedings, survivors often lose their jobs or have to quit their jobs because they have to be in court and spend so much time meeting with the District Attorney's office.
- How long would a domestic violence victim be able to claim a good cause exemption?

We urge you to consider the negative impact mandatory work requirements will have on the lives they are trying to rebuild.

Sincerely,



Sharon K. Roberson